

# Down the ‘crick: The Georges Creek Valley of Western Maryland

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## Contents

### Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
The Companies.....	6
Mining Companies.....	6
Railroads.....	8
Industry.....	14
The Iron Furnace.....	14
The Silk Mill.....	15
The Glass Plant.....	17
Other Industry.....	17
The Towns.....	18
Georges Creek Miscellany.....	26
The C&O Canal at Georges Creek.....	28
Bibliography.....	30

## Introduction

This is a work about the Georges Creek Valley in Allegany County, Western Maryland. The Georges Creek Valley is defined by Dan's Mountain to the east, and Savage Mountain to the West, part of the Appalachian range. Portions of Savage Mountain form the Eastern Continental Divide, separating watersheds draining to the Ohio River and those draining to the Potomac River. The history of the settlement of the Georges Creek Valley is the history of coal. George Washington was familiar with the area from his various trips in the wilderness. Once populated entirely by Native Americans, the region was settled by the English, with families from Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

There is not one comprehensive work on the history of this region, its people and industries. This current book is a start. With more material becoming available on the Internet, research becomes easier. Family history's and oral traditions are going online every day. It is the author's hope that this work can be upgraded, corrected, and expanded.

The Historian Thomas Scharf said that the Georges Creek Valley transformed from an "almost virgin territory" to "one contiguous street and town, twenty-four miles in length, inhabited by miners and their families." The Georges Creek valley stretches from Frostburg to Westernport, Maryland. Along the way, you will find at least that many named towns, each with its own story to tell. The Georges Creek region contains one of the major coal deposits in Appalachia, the fabled "Big Vein." The Big Vein is a 14-foot thick seam of low-sulfur bituminous coal. Maryland State Road 36 and the Georges Creek Railway twist and turn and cross the creek many times. South of Midland, the abandoned roadbed of the Georges Creek and Cumberland Railroad is visible, but the trolley tracks that ran down the middle of the road are long gone. At one time, some 5,000 men labored in the deep mines of the Georges Creek region, bringing *black gold* to the insatiable markets of industry and homes.

Georges Creek is named for the son of Nemacolin, a prominent Native American Delaware Chief. Lonacona, or George Washington Cresap, was the son of Nemacolin..

After his father Checkoconnicon became old, Nemacolin became chief of 160 warriors and moved his tribe from Uniontown area to Fort Redstone, PA (now known as Brownsville). During this time the Virginia Government asked Thomas Cresap to blaze a trail through the mountains from Cumberland to Fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh, PA). This was to facilitate the westward expansion movement of the Ohio Company to the Ohio River and for development of immigrant communities. In 1751 Thomas Cresap asked his friend Nemacolin to help him in blazing this trail because he knew that Nemacolin would know the easiest way over the mountains.

Nemacolin and his sons, Lonacona and William proceeded to Oldtown, MD, to help Cresap map out the old Indian trail leading to Fort Redstone, PA on the Monongahela River. This trail became known as Nemacolin's Path and then became the National Road (Rt. 40) in 1806. When Thomas had successfully mapped out the trail, he left Nemacolin at Fort Redstone, and travelled back to his home in Oldtown, Maryland. Nemacolin's son Lonacona (born before 1738 in Ft. Redstone) asked permission from his father to return to Maryland, as he had become good friends with Daniel Cresap, Thomas' oldest son, and wished to live near him in Rawlings, MD. Nemacolin gave his permission, and Lonacona took his wife and family back with Daniel. Thomas Cresap had named Lonacona, *George Washington Cresap*, to protect him from anti-native American violence.

Lonacona died around 1790 in the home of his friend Dan, and he is buried in the Cresap Cemetery in

Rawlings, MD. Lonacona's daughter Teresa married William Workman of Mt. Savage, MD. Later, William moved his family to Kerens, WV. (From the article "Chief Nemacolin--A Delaware Indian Headman" by Alma Irene King-Finney.)

In August of 1789, a survey by Col. George Gilpin and James Smith went "From the Mouth of Savage to the Mouth of Georges Creek..to the mouth of New Creek...to Fort Cumberland." This Survey was done for the Potomack Company, for a potential canal extending to tidewater at Georgetown.

The origin of the Western Maryland coal business began in the early 19th century when a 14-foot thick seam of bituminous coal referred to as *The Big Vein* was discovered. This coal region became famous during the industrial revolution in the 19th century for its clean-burning low sulfur content that made it ideal for making iron, powering ocean steamers, riverboats, locomotives, steam mills, and machine shops. However, coal production was limited by transportation, and did not really become important until after the B&O Railroad reached Cumberland in 1842. In 1850, the opening of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal from Georgetown to Cumberland provided another route for coal shipments. The cost of transportation dropped, and the coal market took off.

By 1850, some thirty coal companies were mining the George's Creek Valley, producing over 60 million tons of coal between 1854 and 1891. The Consolidation Coal Company, Consol, was established in 1864 and headquartered in the city of Cumberland, MD for its first 85 years (1864-1945).

Western Maryland's yearly coal production reached about 1 million tons in 1865, and exceeded 4 million tons by the turn of the century. It reached an all-time high of about 6 million short tons in 1907. Mine workers would receive 50 cents per ton. A small amount of the coal production in the early 1900s was premium blacksmithing coal that was specially processed and delivered in boxcars to customers throughout the United States and Canada.

There are small but workable deposits of iron ore in the Valley. Christian Detmold, the operator of the Iron Furnace in Lonaconing was responsible for the construction of an early tram road in 1847 from Lonaconing to Clarysville, to connect with the Eckhart Rail Road. This was an attempt to provide transportation for iron goods from Lonaconing. The tram road was horse powered, and used wagons on wooden rails, covered with strap iron. The Georges Creek Railroad connected Lonaconing with the B&O railhead at Piedmont, which was also a target for the extended C&O canal. Originally intended to transport finished iron from the furnace at Lonaconing, the line quickly switched over to being a coal carrier.

The B&O Railroad reached Piedmont, Virginia (now, West Virginia) opposite Westernport, MD, in July 1851. The Georges Creek Coal & Iron company built their line from Piedmont to Lonaconing in 1852. That line was acquired in 1863 by the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad. The shops and engine house at Lonaconing were used until 1867.

Westernport and Piedmont, separated by the Potomac River, became a logical target for connection of the Georges Creek region with other railroads or the canal. One of the two proposed paths for the canal westward from Cumberland to the Ohio River would have passed through Westernport. Unfortunately, the Canal Company ran out of money, and stopped at Cumberland.

The people of the Georges Creek Valley were emigrants from Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Poland, Italy, and other European lands. They worked the mines, ran the railroads, and gave each town along the way its unique character.

The Federal Government was a major consumer of coal, and coal demand exploded during the Civil War, as more new-fangled steam ships were being built. The iron clad Monitor, after her battle at Hampton Roads, came back to the Washington Navy Yard for refitting and repair, and was restocked with Georges Creek coal.

Georges Creek Days is held each year in Lonaconing, MD, to celebrate the people and history of the region. There is a noticeable local dialect and pronunciation in the area, said to be similar to the Scots-English spoken in Ontario Providence of Canada. The author has been accused of having “a Canadian accent.”

### Acknowledgments

A partial list of people and organizations that helped me with this work include: the archives of the Western Maryland Railway Historical Society, Union Bridge, MD; the archives of the Western Maryland Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, Cumberland, MD; the C&O Canal Historical Society; the C&O Canal Visitors Centers, Cumberland; Karen Gray, PhD, at the C&O Canal NHP Library in Hagerstown, MD; Al Feldstein; Frank Tosh, Arlington, Va., Traction/Trolley Expert Extraordinaire; Mel Collins, and The Preservation Society of Allegany County, Cumberland, MD; The Allegany County Library System, including the Georges Creek Branch; The Appalachian Collection at Allegany College of Maryland; Bob Bantz; William Bauman; Eileen Carlton; and many others.

For updates and new information, I can use more help.

### The author

The author was born and raised in Cumberland, Maryland. His ancestors had emigrated from Co. Wicklow in Ireland during the U.S. Civil War, and settled in Lonaconing. They became coal miners. The author’s grandfather was a Magistrate, and later, Mayor, in Midland, Md.

### Dedication

To the sturdy pioneers who settled in the Georges Creek Valley, leaving their homelands to seek their fortune and liberty in the New World.

### Series

The author has published other related books, that expand on topics discussed in this one. These include, *The Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad Revisited*; *Tracks along the Ditch, the Interrelationships between the C&O Canal and the Railroads*; *History of the Industrial Revolution in Western Maryland*; *Lonaconing Residency, Iron Technology and the Railroad*, all available in e-book format. An in-depth look at the Iron facility at Lonaconing, and its influence on the later facility is in work.

Front cover picture, Dan's Rock, showing the various communications antennas. The Valley of the Georges Creek in the background. Photo by author.

# The Companies

This section discusses the Companies that drove the early economy of the Georges Creek Valley. Necessarily, they are mostly extractive industries, with some manufacturing. Raw materials formed the basis of the early economy. This was closely followed by the need for transportation. Small manufacturing establishments sprung up in the Valley, providing an alternative to the mines, and employment for women. Schools and churches sprang up in the various communities, usually consisting of single ethnic and religious groups. Baseball rivalries joined the communities. Families thrived. Infrastructure was built, roads, rail lines, towns, churches, stores, baseball fields.

## Mining Companies

### Borden Mining Company

The Borden Mining Company was incorporated by the Maryland Legislature in 1847. The Borden family had an industrial empire in Fall River, Massachusetts, and needed coal. Mining of coal began in 1850, and lasted until 1899. The Borden Mining Company shipped coal via the C&O Canal at Cumberland to Georgetown, where it owned a wharf property. Coal would then go by coastal ship north to Fall River, Mass.

### Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company

The Georges Creek Coal & Iron (GCC&I) Company was formed in 1835, and chartered in the State of Maryland on March 29, 1836. The president was John Henry Alexander, who also happened to be the Maryland State Engineer. Also associated with the company was Philip C. Tyson. Between 1837 and 1839, the company built an iron furnace at Lonaconing. The furnace, fueled by coke, went into blast in 1839. The company had leased the furnace to Detmold, but later took it back. After that, Georges Creek Coal & Iron operated it sporadically. The furnace produced 1,860 tons of pig iron in its last active year, 1855. It was then shut down, and abandoned. The railroad portion of the Company was sold to the C&P Railroad in 1863. In 1910, it became the Georges Creek Coal Company, and operates to this day. James Millholland was listed as the Second Vice President of the Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company in 1869. He was also the President of the Georges Creek and Cumberland Railway.

### Consolidation Coal

The Consolidation Coal Company was established in 1864 and headquartered in Cumberland, MD, for its first 85 years (1864-1945). During this time, the company became the largest bituminous coal company in the eastern United States.

The company's origin began in the early 19th century when a 14-foot thick seam of bituminous coal referred to historically as The Big Vein “was discovered in the Georges Creek Valley in Western Maryland. By 1850, some 30 coal companies were mining the Georges Creek Valley, producing over 60 million tons of coal from 1854 to 1891. The Consolidated Coal Company was formed as a consolidation of the many small coal mine and railroad companies of Western Maryland founded during the rush years. The Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad was owned by the Consolidation Coal Company.

The Western Maryland region's coal production increased about 1 million short tons in 1865, exceeded

4 million short tons by the turn of the century, and reached an all time high of about 6 million short tons in 1907.

Sharp declines in coal demand after 1920, reflecting downturns in the economy, recurrent labor problems and the extensive replacement of coal by petroleum led to further consolidations and mergers in the coal industry. In 1945, Consolidated Coal Company merged with the Pittsburgh Coal Company, and the corporate headquarters was moved from Cumberland to Pittsburgh. In 1966 the Continental Oil Company (Conoco) purchased the assets of Consolidation Coal Company, and in 1981 DuPont purchased Conoco. As of 1999 the company has renamed itself Consol Energy, reflecting the diversification of the business into other forms of energy. It is still in operation as of this writing.

### Lonaconing Ocean Coal Mining and Transportation Company

The company was authorized in 1853 by the Maryland State Legislature. It was formed by William H. Aspinwall, Edward Cunard, Auguste Belmont, Joseph B. Varnum, Jonathan Meredith, Edward J. Woolsey, and James L. Graham. They were authorized to mine coal, and to build railroads as needed in Allegany County, or purchase or lease them. They could own and operate steam or sailing vessels. They could condemn land they needed for the railroad projects. They were authorized to collect transportation tolls of three cents per ton-mile on merchandise and two cents per mile for passengers traveling on its railroad..

If you wanted to set up a mining and transportation company in 1853, it would be hard to pull together a better set of directors:

William Henry Aspinwall (December 16, 1807 – January 18, 1875) was an American businessman. In 1832, he became president of the "Howland & Aspinwall" merchant firm, which had been founded by his cousin and expanded trade to South America, China, Europe, the Mediterranean, and the East and West Indies. In 1848, he founded the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. He then promoted the Panama Railroad across the Isthmus. He retired in 1856 but remained active as a philanthropist. He was a founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City.

Edward Cunard was the son of Sir Samuel Cunard of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Sir Samuel founded the Cunard Line, a British shipping Company, which still operates with a Headquarters in London. The mining company would give the steamship line an assured source of premium coal.

August Belmont, Sr. was born in the German region of Hesse. He immigrated to New York in 1837 after becoming the American representative of the Rothschild banking house in Frankfurt. He founded August Belmont & Company believing that he could replace the defunct American Agency with his company. It was an instant success, and Belmont was able to straighten out the Rothschild interests in the United States between 1837 and 1842. On receiving his American citizenship, he married Caroline Slidell Perry, daughter of Commodore Matthew Perry.

Joseph B. Varnum was associated with the Mt. Savage Iron Company, and the railroads. He built the Varnum House, a hotel in Mount Savage.

Jonathan Meredith, b. 1784, was a commercial lawyer in Baltimore; council for the Bank of the United States and the Bank of Baltimore. He had the acquaintance of every President from Washington to

Grant. Politically well-connected, he was.

Edward J. Woolsey, of Woolsey Mansion, Astoria, Long Island (built 1726), was also a Director of the Delaware & Hudson Canal and Railroad Co., 1860.

James Lorimer Graham (1804-1882) was an American lawyer specializing in real estate. He was president of the Metropolitan Insurance Company in New York City.

The Lonaconing Ocean Coal Mining and Transportation Company changed its name, with the concurrence of the Maryland State Legislature, to the Ocean Steam Coal Company in 1872.

Other coal company's included the American Coal Company, Swanton and Caledonia Mines, Davis & Reeman, the Piedmont Coal & Iron Company, the Potomac Coal Co., the Swanton Mining Co., the Georges Creek Mining Co., the Barton Coal Mining Co., and many others. Some were family operations, with the father, sons, and uncle's working a vein on a farm. Some were one-man operations.

## **Railroads**

The first railroad in the region was the Georges Creek, built, too late as it turned out, to move pig iron down to Westernport from the furnace at Lonaconing. Westernport, on the Potomac river was the connection points for the B&O going east, and for the proposed extension of the C&O Canal and the B&O Railroad to the West.

### Georges Creek Rail Road

The Georges Creek Rail Road was never chartered as a separate business entity, but was always a part of Georges Creek Coal & Iron. In September of 1851, railroad construction began up the Georges Creek from Westernport, where the B&O had reached Piedmont across the Potomac in Virginia. The railroad was opened on May 9, 1853. The Maryland State Legislature authorized the GCC&I to allow pedestrian, livestock, and wagon traffic over their bridge, and to collect tolls. Five cents per person, five cents per cow, three cents per smaller livestock, and ten cents per wheel. The tolls could only be collected from a user once per day for use of the bridge.

In June 1853, a total of 1,061 tons of coal were shipped. In all of 1855, 225,000 tons of coal was shipped, sometimes in 102 car trains. Iron ore or cast iron did not figure into the shipments. In 1856, the line was extended from Lonaconing northward to connect with the C&P from Frostburg. The Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company's 9.2 mile railroad was acquired by the C&P on October 23, 1863. The shops and engine house at Lonaconing were used until 1867.

### Georges Creek Railway

The Georges Creek Railway is a modern small Class-III railroad, doing switching services at the paper mill in Westernport. In 2011, it acquired the rail line up the Georges Creek from Morrison's to the end of track near Midlothian. The rail line has adopted as its trademark, "Rails to the Big Vein," initiated by author Deane Mellander in his Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad Book. This logo will be appearing on railcars and motive power. George's Creek plans to put the rail line back into service, and re-energize the coal trade in the region by providing transportation services to the Port of Baltimore.



## Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad

March 13, 1850, marked the date of incorporation of the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad (C&P) Company, as approved by the legislature of the State of Maryland. In 1887, the C&P filed a charter in the State of West Virginia. The Commissioners of the company in Maryland were Robert Garrett, John Q. Hewlett, P.H. Sullivan, all of Baltimore, William Price and George A. Thruston, lawyers of Cumberland, and Andrew Stewart and Edward D. Gayzan of Pennsylvania.

“That the President and Directors of said Company shall be, and they are hereby invested with all the rights and powers necessary to the construction and repair of a Railroad from the town of Cumberland, to some suitable point on the dividing line between the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania, to be by them determined, not exceeding sixty feet wide, with as many sets of tracks as the said President and Directors, or a majority of them, may necessary, and they, or a majority of them may cause to be made, or contract with others for making said Railroad, or any part of it, and they, their agents, or those with whom they may contract for making any part of the same, or their agents, may enter upon, and use and excavate, all lands which may be wanted for the site of said road, or the erection of warehouses or other works necessary to said road, or for any other purpose necessary or useful in the construction or repair of said road or its works, and that they may build bridges, may fix scales and weights, may lay rails, may take and use any earth, timber, gravel, stone or other materials which may be wanted for the construction or repair of any part of said road, or any of its works, and may make and construct all works whatsoever which may be necessary and expedient, in order to the proper completion of said road, and that they, or a majority of them, may make or cause to be made, lateral Railroads in any direction whatsoever, in connecting said Railroad from the town of Cumberland to the dividing line between the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and in the construction of the same or their works, shall have, possess, and may exercise all the rights and powers hereby given to them, in order to the construction or repair of the said Railroad, from the town of Cumberland to the dividing line between the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania.”

The transportation rates were spelled out and fixed:

“..and they shall have power to charge for toll upon (and the transportation of persons) goods, produce, merchandise, or property of any kind whatsoever, transported by them along said railroad, from the town of Cumberland to the dividing line between the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania, any sum not exceeding the following rates, namely on all goods, produce, merchandise or property of any description whatsoever transported by them, not exceeding three cents a ton per mile for tolls, and three cents a ton per mile for transportation, and for the transportation of passengers, not exceeding three cents per mile for each passenger; and it shall not be lawful for any other company, or any person or persons whatsoever, to travel upon or use any of the roads of said company, or to transport persons, merchandise, produce or property of any description whatsoever, along said roads or any of them, without the license or permission of the President and Directors of said company”

Later, four more commissioners, all from Baltimore, were named: James M. Buchanan, Elijah M. Bartholow, David Stewart and Charles R. Clark.

In February 1866, it was added:

“And be it further enacted, That the President and Directors of said company shall be, and they are

hereby invested with full right and power to connect with any existing railroad leading from the town of Cumberland at any point west of Cumberland, and to construct a railroad from the place of such connection to the Pennsylvania line, or to purchase any such railroad, or any part thereof, and the lands, franchises and appurtenances held for the purpose of the same, with power to construct and build a connection from any railroad, or part of any railroad so purchased, from any point thereof, west of Cumberland, the said President and Directors may choose, to the Pennsylvania line.”

And, in fact, they had to.

“And be it further enacted, That in case said President and Directors shall purchase any existing railroad, or part of such road as aforesaid, or in case they shall make any connection With any existing railroad, and construct such connection to the Pennsylvania line as aforesaid, then so much of said Act, being the twentieth section thereof, as declares such charter forfeited, in case the road provided for in the twelfth section thereof is not commenced in six years after the passage of said Act, and shall not be completed in twelve years from the commencement thereof, shall be inoperative and void.”

But this was subsequently repealed:

“And it be enacted, That the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad Company, be, and it is hereby wholly relieved from any obligation to construct a railroad to the Pennsylvania line, acid that the twentieth section of said original act imposing a forfeiture in relation thereto, be and the same is hereby repealed.”

And they didn’t necessarily have first choice:

“Provided, that the Pittsburgh and Connellsville Rail Road Company, as proposed to be chartered, by a bill now pending, in the laying out and constructing their road from the town of Cumberland to the Pennsylvania line, shall have priority of choice over any road to be laid out or constructed by the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Rail Road Company in the right of way.”

By construction and acquisition, the Cumberland & Pennsylvania built itself into a formidable position, as noted by the Assembly in 1906:

“Whereas, The tracks of the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad Company now extend from Cumberland, in Allegany county, Maryland, to Piedmont, in the State of West Virginia, running through the entire coal basin of said Allegany county, and to a very large extent controlling the entire output of coal in this State.”

The Assembly also noted:

“It is now apparent that the extensive corporate rights and franchises granted by this State to the said Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad Company are not now being used and exercised for the purpose intended by the State, but on the other hand are being used to the detriment of the material interests of the State and in such a way as to promote the development of coal fields in the State of Pennsylvania and West Virginia to the disadvantage of the State of Maryland.”

In a period of consolidation following the Civil War, the Cumberland & Pennsylvania absorbed all of the pioneer mining railroads in Allegany County, including the Georges Creek Rail Road. It had

competition in Lonaconing later, when the rival Georges Creek & Cumberland Railway was built. And if that were not enough track squeezed into the valley, a trolley system also linked Lonaconing and the other towns with Frostburg, Cumberland, and Westernport.

The C&P was acquired by the Western Maryland Railroad after World War 2. The tracks down the Creek were operated by that road, by the subsequent Chessie System, and by CSX Corporation. Construction of Interstate-68 cut the line near Midlothian. Track remains on the southern section. It was acquired by start-up shortline Georges Creek Railway.

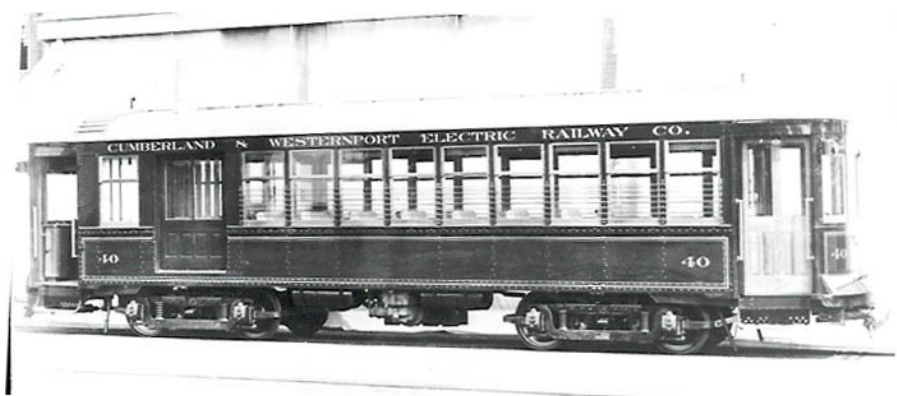
### Cumberland & Westernport Electric Railway

In the 1890's, interest began to form in a trolley system to service the Georges Creek area. In 1893, the Lonaconing and Cumberland Electric Railway was incorporated. This was followed by the incorporation of the Frostburg, Eckhart, and Cumberland, the Lonaconing, Midland, and Frostburg, and the Westernport & Lonaconing by 1901.

In 1901, work started from Frostburg towards Cumberland. By 1902, the line stretched from Frostburg down the Georges Creek to Lonaconing. The first passenger run was made on April 24, 1902. At Cumberland, an interchange was made with the Cumberland Electric Railway, a local city service. There was a ticket office and terminus at Baltimore and Centre Streets. Hourly service was provided. The Cumberland and Westernport Electric Railway (C&WE) was formed by merger in 1906. An extension of the system to Salisbury, PA, and to Keyser WV were considered, but never built. Miner's specials ran down the Georges Creek, to provide transportation for the different shifts.

The trolleys also carried the mail and parcels over their 27 miles of standard gauge track. The growth of freight and express service lead to the use of a freight-only trolley, making two trips per day.

Brill equipment was used, with some Southern cars being acquired later in the operation. There was a coal burning 500 kilowatt power station and a car barn at Clarysville, serviced by the C&P. There was an auxiliary 400 kilowatt power station at Reynolds.



By 1924, the private automobile was making inroads on ridership of the traction line. The operation was sold to Cities Service, who replaced the trolleys with buses and freight trucks by 1925. This scenario was repeated countless times across the United States, as the General Motors-backed Cities Service phased out electric trolleys in favor of diesel trucks and buses.

The C&WE was not to be outdone in computational capability. The Cumberland Times newspaper mentions on March 6, 1916, "An ingenious machine – The Cumberland & Westernport Electric Railroad has just installed in their office a very ingenious machine that adds, subtracts, multiplies, and divides, works proportion, cube root, and shows the positions of the decimal."

Rail service was discontinued between Frostburg and Westernport on July 22, 1925, and between Frostburg and Cumberland on August 4, 1926. The right-of-way and equipment was transferred to the Cumberland & Westernport Transit Company, which held the right-of-way until 1943. The company was dissolved in 1955.

### Georges Creek & Cumberland Railroad

The Georges Creek & Cumberland (GC&C) Railroad was the creation of two mining companies, the Maryland Coal Company, and the American Coal Company, both competitors to Consol, who couldn't secure reasonable rates for transportation.

The Maryland Coal Company was formed in 1870, as a result of as Maryland Legislature action to change the name of the Mutual Coal Company, chartered in 1868. An Act of the Legislature in 1878 enlarged the powers granted to the company to engage in the transportation business as well. The American Coal Company was chartered in 1852, and similarly had its charter amended in 1878 to allow it to engage in the railroad business. They were authorized to construct a railroad from their mines to the C&O Canal, or the B&O Railroad.

The Maryland Coal company had mines on the west rise of the Big Vein, near Lonaconing. Their Kingsland mine operated with 104 men in 1907, delivering 900 tons per day. It used a 42-inch gauge, 2,000 foot long tram road from the mine to a tipple on the GC&C. Their Appleton mine used the same tipple. The tipple loaded coal into the coal hoppers, and had a facility for loading the locomotive tender as well. The tram road operated with a 10-ton locomotive.

Maryland Coal also operated the Tyson and New Detmold mines with 52 men producing 1000 tons per day in 1907. Here, they utilized a fireless haulage locomotive, which was charged with steam at a central plant near the mine mouth. The 42-inch mine track was operated with 1,600 pound mine cars that had a 5,000 pound capacity.

American Coal Company's Jackson Mine at Pekin, and Caledonia Mine at Barton, worked the Big Vein. From the mine mouth, a 22-ton locomotive transported the coal cars over a one mile long tram road to a tipple on the C&P line.

In the Georges Creek Coal Region of Allegany County in the 1870's, the transportation monopoly was controlled by the Cumberland & Pennsylvania (C&P) Railroad, which was owned by the Consolidation Coal Company. Rival companies could not get competitive rates to move their coal from the mines to the B&O and the canal. The solution was seen as two-fold: build a second railroad, and involve the B&O's rival, the Pennsylvania Railroad. The GC&C should not be confused with the earlier Georges Creek Rail Road.

The GC&C was born out of controversy and competition with the C&P, and this climate of anti-cooperation continued. The GC&C had to fight its way past the C&P into Cumberland, and then fight

for the right to reach the canal over B&O trackage. The first fight was at the west end of Cumberland, an area known as City Junction. The GC&C had to cross the C&P's Potomac Wharf Branch, which was there first. The Pennsylvania Railroad in Maryland line had been built from the Pennsylvania state line to the west side of the Narrows. It was their intent to continue down the north side of the Narrows, along with the C&P and B&O mains, to Cumberland. The C&P persuaded the other road to bridge Will's Creek, and continue down the south side of the Narrows, then cross the C&P's Potomac Wharf Branch at City Junction. When the line was built to City Junction, the C&P changed its mind. It kept an engine parked at the intended crossing point, blocking construction. When the engine was a bit late getting back into position one day, the GC&C trackmen forced the crossing. The C&P trackmen tore it out. Tempers flared. The C&P raised its trackbed, making crossing impossible. The final issues were decided in court, in favor of allowing the GC&C crossing with due compensation. Then, the B&O did not want to grant the GC&C trackage rights to reach the canal terminus, and that issue also had to be resolved in court.

The Western Maryland Railroad purchased the controlling stock interests of the GC&C on January 17, 1907. The GC&C was a small but key part of the Gould master plan for a transcontinental railroad link. The financial panic of 1907 put an end to these grand schemes. Bankruptcy followed. Operation of the GC&C was taken over by the newly reorganized Western Maryland Railway in July of 1913. A full merger and consolidation took place on January 23, 1917. The line was operated until 1939, when the Western Maryland abandoned the track from Georges Creek Junction to Midland. Mines west of Midland were then served through an interchange with the C&P at Jackson Junction, north of Lonaconing.

From 1869 to 1879, James A. Millholland, son of the James who set up the C&P shops, was the second vice-president of the C&P. He was lured away to become General Manager, later President, of the Georges Creek and Cumberland Railroad. Part of the deal was his new house, located behind the Emmanuel Episcopal Church on Washington Street in Cumberland.

The GC&C started as two separate pieces, the line to Vale Summit and Lonaconing called the GC&C, and the connection to Pennsylvania, called the *Pennsylvania Railroad in Maryland*. These were merged under the name Georges Creek and Cumberland. Later, the Connellsville Extension of the Western Maryland Railroad was built under the umbrella of the GC&C. On July 1, 1913, the GC&C was formally absorbed into the Western Maryland system, and the Connellsville extension became WM trackage, as did the Pennsylvania Railroad in Maryland. This ended the hope of extending the original Georges Creek & Cumberland line.

The Juniata Lumber Company's railroad is discussed in the section on the Town of Midlothian.

# Industry

## The Iron Furnace

The Georges Creek Coal & Iron Company was formed in 1835, and chartered in the State of Maryland on March 29, 1836. The president was John Henry Alexander, who also happened to be the Maryland State Engineer. Between 1837 and 1839, the company built an iron furnace at Lonaconing. The furnace, fueled by coke, went into blast in 1839. There was plenty of iron ore, limestone, water, and coal locally, but the major problem the company faced was transporting finished products to market. Production reached 75 tons per week, and local iron needs were quickly satisfied. Some products were shipped out by wagon, including such items as dowels for the C&O Canal walls. The adjacent casting house made farming implements, mine car wheels and track, and household utensils. The furnace output was in the form of cast pig iron, which was sold to be recast, or worked.

Ore for the furnace came from mines on the hill behind the furnace. Tram roads were used to transport the ore to the furnace. Later, the mine tunnels were used as storage cellars by residents on the hill. Ore was also mined on the opposite hillside, above the (later) silk factory, and the area around Buck Hill. Ore also came from Koontz. The *Tilley Field* was on Hugh Weir's property, on the east side of a fork of Laurel Run. Another tunnel was located on the Philip Hansel land, just south of Tilley Field. It was reported to be 6 feet high, and a 100 feet long. From 1848 through 1858, ore came from the area around Pompey Smash (Vale Summit), on the south side of Dan's Rock Road.

One key ingredient of a blast furnace is the blast. The company bought the necessary machinery from the West Point Foundry in New York City. The machinery went by ship from New York to Georgetown, then by canal to Williamsport. Here, the parts were loaded on wagons for the final leg of the journey. The canal charged \$3.50 per ton to transport the twenty tons of machinery parts. Only the boilers made it to Lonaconing before the canal froze in the winter of 1837. Ten additional wagon loads from Williamsport arrived at the site in November.

The blast machinery featured a 60-horsepower steam engine fed by five boilers. The steam cylinders were 18" in diameter, and 8 feet long. The system operated at a pressure of 50 pounds per square inch (psi). The steam cylinder drove a blast cylinder 5 feet in diameter, and 8 feet long. This forced about 3500 cubic feet per minute of air at 2.5 psi through the system. A very large iron regulator smoothed the air flow from the reciprocating cylinder. The air flowed through a series of pipes in the boiler furnaces and was heated to 700 degrees F. The heated air then entered the blast furnace through two big water cooled nozzles called *tuyeres*. When the water supply failed, the furnace had to be operated with a less efficient cold blast. The first run of good iron came from the furnace on May 17, 1839. By May 23, the furnace was producing six tons per day. Seven tons of coal were required to produce one ton of the cast metal.

Lonaconing was run by the Company as an enclave of Industrial Feudalism. It was on its way to becoming the Wales of America. At least, that was the language of choice, spoken by the emigre iron workers.

With production going well, iron piled up in Lonaconing. In 1842, sales of pig iron to foundries in Cumberland were begun, with delivery by wagon. An adjacent sawmill and lumberyard, also owned by the company, recorded sales to the Mount Savage Iron Works, then involved in building their own

furnaces. In the fall of 1842, pig iron was offered to the B&O railroad at a price of \$29. per ton, but delivery was still a problem. After experimenting with a horse powered tram road, the company realized that a rail line, built down the Georges Creek Valley toward the Potomac River at Westernport, would be the answer to the transportation issue. The rail line was finished from Lonaconing to Piedmont in 1853, where it connected with the recently arrived B&O Railroad. It was, unfortunately, too late to provide the needed market access for the Lonaconing Iron Furnace. The furnace in Lonaconing was abandoned in 1855, and the canal was never extended past Cumberland. Coal, not iron, became the most important commodity shipped out of the region on the railroad. The works had employed 220 men.

After Detmold operated the furnace facility successfully for a few years, the Company took it back. After that, Georges Creek Coal & Iron operated it sporadically. The furnace produced 1,860 tons of pig iron in its last active year, 1855. It was then shut down, and abandoned. Harvey states that the furnace facility was too technologically advanced for its time. However, it provided an impetus for the mining industry and for the construction of the railroad, and served as a model for a similar iron working facility built at Mount Savage. There was technology sharing and cooperation between the facilities at Lonaconing and at Mount Savage. The Lonaconing facility produced wrought iron dowels and lock gate hinges for the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal construction.

The furnace complex at Lonaconing was visited by the Superintendent of Construction for the B&O, a Mr. Casper Wever, Esq., in June of 1839. Shortly afterwards, the shareholders of the C&O Canal visited. With the furnace up and operating, the facility expansion plans included a forge and rolling mill. However, these were never built. The company began to concentrate on the railroad to meet with the canal and the railroad at Westernport. By 1850, surveys were complete.

The furnace sat idle for many years. It was named to the National Register of Historic Places, and was rehabilitated and stabilized by the firm of Meyers and D'Aleo, Inc. of Baltimore.

## **The Silk Mill**

The idea for a silk mill in Lonaconing, Maryland, began on a train's smoking car in the early 1900s. Mr. Duncan Sloan, local banker, became a salesman for his hometown when he overheard that the Klots Throwing Company was looking for a suitable site for a new plant. Mr. Sloan emphasized the availability of surplus labor and cheap fuel in the region. The coal industry that the region depended upon was notorious for layoffs due to periods of slackening demand, so the mill would supplement wages and provide for more steady employment. He also stressed Lonaconing's access to rail transportation in an effort to persuade the representative that his town would be the ideal location for a new mill. Five weeks after the smoking car meeting, Mr. George Klots, and Mr. J. H. Britton, representing the company, proposed erecting Klots Throwing Mill Company in Lonaconing. A dialog between the New York-based company and the town began. Shortly after the proposal was made, a public meeting occurred at the Evans Opera House in Lonaconing. The town citizens decided to accept the offer made by Mr. Klots and Mr. Britton. At the meeting, the decision was made to establish a committee of seven businessmen to seek bonds that were to be made payable to the Lonaconing Savings Bank. Proceeds from the bond issue would finance construction costs. The total cost for building and equipping the mill was estimated to be about \$100,000. The town and the committee were able to furnish at least \$47,000 of the \$100,000. A piece of land, 250' by 400', was purchased along Railroad Street to be the home of the new facility. Ground was broken by the S.W. Wise Construction Company of Cumberland on August 13, 1905.

In 1907 George Klots of New York opened a silk throwing mill in Lonaconing, Maryland, to take advantage of the inexpensive labor and cheap coal available in this coal mining area. The operation depended heavily on the labor of women and young children, who were not be employed by the mining industry. Labor conditions improved through the years, and the mill continued production until 1957, when synthetic fibers encroached on the traditional silk fabric market.

There were similar Klots Throwing mills in Scranton, Carbondale, Archibald, and Forrest City, PA and Fredericksburg, VA. There was also a Klots Mill in Cumberland on Gay Street. This still stands as a 60,000 square foot brick industrial building, being converted to housing.

Beginning with a crew of mostly youngsters, some as young as seven, the mill became part of an American silk throwing dynasty with 14 mills, 6,000 workers, and \$50 million dollars in annual sales. In the 1930s, the company added rayon to its products. With the 1940s came a wartime silk shortages and the rise of synthetic fibers. The dynasty collapsed several years before the last production run in 1957, when reelers, coners, and testers walked away from what was now General Textile Mill and never returned. The doors closed and time froze inside. This remains the only intact silk mill in the United States.

Photo by author.



The raw silk came from the Orient to the West Coast of the United States via fast sailing ship, and was transferred to express trains for the journey east. This was a time-sensitive cargo, and the silk trains were given privilege even over passenger trains. The manufacture of silk was a multi-step process. Raw silk came from Italy, Spain, India, China and Japan. The fibers were reeled into skeins containing 1 to 2 ounces of silk each. The skeins were bundled into large bales of 200 pounds each. These bales were imported into the United States.

Raw silk was too coarse to be worked as it came from the bales, and it contained a natural gum that had to be removed. Thus, the first step in the processing of silk was to wash it in large vats. Next, the silk was wrung out and allowed to dry. This process was known as “throwing.” From there, the silk went into the winding process. The skeins were opened, placed on an apparatus called a “swift” and attached to a spool. The silk was wound onto the spools. In some cases, depending upon its intended use, the thread had to be doubled. If so, two or more threads were united on one spool. The spools, or bobbins, of silk were then twisted, reeled and made into new skeins that were taken to be dyed.



The mill was run by steam, with an extensive arrangement of overhead line shafts to drive the mills by leather belts. The throwing mill produced silk thread from the raw silk, which was then wound on bobbins. This product was in turn shipped, mostly by rail, to weaving plants near Reading, Pennsylvania to make cloth, ribbon, and finished products. The silk mill had its own rail siding off of the C&P line. The Company still exists as General Textile Mills.

### **The Glass Plant**

Between the Silk Mill and the railroad tracks, a glass factory was built in 1914 by Thomas and Alfred Dugan. The Dugan Glass Company was operating by November, and sent two tableware patterns to the Pittsburgh Glass Exhibit in December. Evidence from an ad in China, Glass & Lamps magazine for February of 1915 shows a series of products being made by the works.

In March of 1915, the Dugans quit the business. Alfred went to a glass company in Indiana that the brother had started some years before. Thomas went to the Hocking Glass Company in Ohio. The local company became known as the Lonaconing Glass Company, and changed its product line from pressed to blown glass. A wartime shortage of natural gas caused a closing of the plant in 1918. The plant opened again in 1920 as the Utility Glass Company, making federally mandated non-glare headlight lens for automobile lights. They also produced some pressed and blown glass, and did acid etching.

The factory closed in 1929, but was reopened again by The Sloan Brothers (Alexander and Dixon) as The Sloan Glass Company. The brothers had lost their Potomac Glass Company (Cumberland) to a fire. Bad luck followed them, as the Lonaconing plant burned on March 6, 1932.

### **Other Industry**

Lonaconing also hosted the Lonaconing Savings Bank, an Ice manufacturing and storage company, a printing company, and a weekly newspaper, the Advocate.

Midland was the site of the Midland Manufacturing Company, that made “Fine shirts, Miners' and Lumberman's Flannels, Ladies' Tailored Waists and Middy Blouses.” This was housed in a 3-story building, and employed 25 skilled operators. The machinery was run by electricity, and the owners were local.

## The Towns

Many unincorporated Towns sprang up along the Georges Creek, some just a few houses, but each with its own story to tell. Some areas were settled by people from the same area in Europe. Some were settled by a single large family. We'll present these in alphabetical order.

Navigating the Georges Creek Region.

We'll broadly define the Georges Creek Region not only by the path of Georges Creek, which rises south of Frostburg to flow into the Potomac at Westernport, but also include Dan's Mountain as the easternmost boundary. The Towns and place names are presented alphabetically. A lot of the land in the Georges Creek Valley was originally granted to veterans of the Revolutionary War for their service. Many groups of identical houses were later built as company towns for employees.

Maryland Route 936, or Upper Georges Creek Road, winds its way from Main Street in Frostburg to Midland. It follows the Georges Creek, and is the old two-lane alignment of Maryland Route 36.

Route 36 is the main drag of the Georges Creek Valley, a role that the Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad once filled. At Midland, the original Route 36 to Frostburg becomes Route 936, and Route 55 branches off to take a more easterly approach through Vale Summit to Clarysville. Parts of the road through the Georges Creek region is designated the Coal Heritage Trail.

Route 55 runs south from Route 40 at Clarysville, passing under Interstate 68. Just under the Interstate, to the right, or north, is the discharge of the Hoffman Drainage Tunnel, and the site of a large horseshoe curve once used by the Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad to ease the gradient into the mines at Hoffman and Eckhart. The road leads through Pompey (Vale Summit), and intersects Route 36 (Lower Georges Creek Road) from Frostburg. Continue on Route 55 to the North, and you will intersect Route 936 (Upper Georges Creek Road) between near Midlothian, and the source of the Georges Creek.

Upper Georges Creek Road and Lower Georges Creek Road combine at Midland, and continue to the south as just Georges Creek Road. South of Lonaconing, Route 36 was improved, and "old" route 36 lies to the right (or North), but is not continuous.

### Barton

The town named by the Reverend William Shaw for his home town in England, Barton-on-Humber. The Shaw Mansion was part of a 1200 acre estate.

The Reverend Shaw settled in the area around 1794. His son laid out the Town in 1853. The same year, the first shipment of coal was made on the Georges Creek Rail Road. The Town also had a water-powered grist mill, built on Moore's Run by Henry Ingram. It was owned and operated by Mathias Ball. He also owned a tannery in the area. The Morrison Mill was a second grist mill, south of town on Mill Run. Barton sported a C&P station, and a siding for the Swanton mine. It now is the home to about 475 people. Barton suffered a bad fire in 1919, and it had no fire department at the time. It was only brought under control by dynamiting homes in its path.

The Barton Coal Company plane, a cable railway, was built in 1854 by engineer O. D. Robbins. It operated until 1898, and was used to bring coal down to the railroad.

Barton has a memorial plaque for war veterans,

### Borden

Borden, or Borden Shaft, was the site of a major deep mine in the Valley. The principal owners of the mines were the Borden family of Massachusetts. Deep mines were unusual in the area, as most were drift mines in the Big Vein region. In 1907, the mine operator was H. and W. Hitchens Coal company. The C&P railroad delivered the windlass for the mine, then used its railroad crane to set it in place. Borden had a population of 235, as of 2010.

### Carlos

Carlos is a family name. It was a Company town along the C&P railroad line, between Borden and Midland.

### Carlos Junction

This spot is where the rail branch to the coal mines at Carlos left the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Main line. It is located south of Frostburg, along Route 936, the old alignment of route 36.

At Carlos Junction, the railroad branched across Georges Creek to serve several mines. Only the bridge abutments remain, and are still visible. A water tank and station were located here, as well as an engine house, yards, and a permanently stationed engine. Trains on the Carlos Branch were slow ordered to 8 mph.

### Clarysville

Clarysville is named after Gerald Clary, from Missouri, who owned 325 acres, and built a brick inn on the National Road in 1807. The Inn was taken over by the Union Army for use as a Hospital during the Civil War. That structure was unfortunately destroyed by a fire in 1999.

Clarysville was the location of a power plant for the Cumberland and Westernport Electric Railway (trolley). It was located east of town, and was serviced by the Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad for coal deliveries. The trolley ran from Cumberland to Frostburg, and then down along the Georges creek to Westernport, in the middle of the road.

Old route 40 still passes by Clarysville, and new Interstate 68 passes over the Town on a large bridge. Clarysville is the site of an original stone bridge for the National Road, the exit of the Hoffman drainage tunnel for the mines, and was along both the Cumberland and Pennsylvania Railroad, Eckhart Branch, the Georges Creek and Cumberland Railroads, and the trolley line.

### Dawson

Dawson is a family name. The collection of houses is located south of Lonaconing, along Route 36.

### Detmold

The Town is named for Christian Edward Detmold of Lonaconing Iron Furnace fame. It is located

south of Lonaconing, along route 36. It had a population of 71 in 2010.

### Dogwood Flats

This was the site of the Potomac Coal Company Mine, and Union Mining Co. Mine. It is located south of Lonaconing, along Route 36.

### Franklin

Franklin, just north of Westernport on route 36, is located on a 100 year flood plane of the Georges Creek. It was named after the Franklin Coal Company, operator of the Franklin Mine. This was later part of the Davis Coal and Coke Company. A section of houses of the same design usually signifies company housing for miners.

A small crane, numbered 102, was constructed by the C&P in 1901, and consisted of a 40,000 capacity wood underframe car equipped with a 5 ton manual crane. It was kept in Franklin. There was also a water tank for the locomotives. An 1889 era carpenter shop, tool and oil house, office, passenger car shed, sand house, blacksmith and supply shop, and a 1903 vintage engine house were also located there. Nothing remains of this activity.

The White Brothers Foundry was also located at Franklin.

### Gannon

Gannon is a Family name. Gannon was the site of a bridge collapse in 1887, which sent C&P engine 28 into Georges Creek. It is located south of Lonaconing along route 36. The Butner Company Mines six and seven were located at Gannon.

### Gilmore

Gilmore, south of Midland, was the site of a tannery, and a turntable for a narrow gauge mining railroad. It was the location of mines operated by the Midland Coal and Iron company. The company headquarters building is preserved as a dwelling. The town's population was 127 in 2010.

### Jackson Junction

This is where the Georges Creek & Cumberland Railroad and the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad interchanged, north of Lonaconing. The Georges Creek and Cumberland was to the east side, and the C&P to the west side of the creek. Most of the Georges Creek track has been removed, but the C&P track is in place. Jackson is just north of Lonaconing.

### Klondike

Klondike is a small collection of houses, that were built around the site of the Klondike mine. It is located on Route 936, between Frostburg and Midland. It had a reported population of 118 in 2010. It was the site of the Consolidation Coal company's Mine 17, producing 5,000 tons per day.

### Knapp's Meadow

Possibly the first stone house built in the George's Creek was constructed in 1797 in Knapps Meadow, north of Lonaconing by Samuel VanBuskirk.

This was the site of a major railroad junction, where the Georges Creek and Cumberland passed over the trolley lines and the Cumberland & Pennsylvania line on a large trestle. It is the site of the modern Georges Creek Elementary School. This is just north of Lonaconing.

The Georges Creek & Cumberland railroad bridge abutment near the creek to the right can still be seen. Near Jackson Junction., just past the grade crossing, was a section house where the GC&C and C&P railroads intersected.

### Lauder

Lauder was the site of 2 mines, Hoffa Number 2, and Donald. Lauder is south of Barton. It is also the name of a town on the Scottish border.

### Loarville

This small collection of houses is south of Clarysville on Route 55. Loar is a local family name.

### Lonaconing

The town of Lonaconing was named for Lonacona. Georges Creek was also named for him. Lonacona died around 1790 in the home of his friend Dan, and he is buried in the Cresap Cemetery in Rawlings, MD. Lonacona's daughter Teresa married William Workman of Mt. Savage, MD. Later, William moved his family to Kerens, WV. (From the article "Chief Nemacolin--A Delaware Indian Headman" by Alma Irene King-Finney.) Lonacona, or George Washington Cresap, was the son of Nemacolin, a famous Delaware Chief.

After his father Checkoconnicon became old, Nemacolin became chief of 160 warriors and he moved his tribe from Uniontown area to Fort Redstone, PA (now known as Brownsville). During this time the Virginia Government asked Thomas Cresap to blaze a trail through the mountains from Cumberland to Fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh, PA). This was to help the westward movement of the Ohio Company to the Ohio River and the State of Ohio for development of white communities. In 1751 Thomas Cresap asked his friend Nemacolin to help him in blazing this trail because he knew that Nemacolin would know the easiest way over the mountains,

Nemacolin and his sons, Lonacona and William proceeded to Oldtown, MD, to help Cresap map out the old Indian trail leading to Ft. Redstone, PA. on the Monongahela River. This trail became known as Nemacolin's Path and then the National Road (Rt. 40) in 1806. When Thomas had successfully mapped out the trail, he left Nemacolin in Ft. Redstone to travel back to his home in Oldtown, MD. Nemacolin's son Lonacona (born before 1738 in Fort Redstone, PA) asked permission from his father to return to Maryland, as he had become good friends with Daniel Cresap, Thomas' oldest son, and wished to live near him in Rawlings, MD. Nemacolin gave his permission, and Lonacona took his Delaware wife and family back with Daniel. Thomas Cresap had named Lonacona, George Washington Cresap to protect him from white violence.

Lonaconing sported a two passenger and a freight station, and several local industries including a bakery, brewery, and a glass works. The first industry served was the Iron Furnace, located in the City Park. Across Georges Creek are the rail lines, and the Silk Factory, Klott's Throwing Mill (1906-1957), abandoned, but frozen in time. It had its own siding, with raw silk coming in boxcars, and finished silk thread being shipped out to fabric mills in the area of Reading, Pennsylvania. A glass factory (circa 1920) stood across from the silk mill, but burned, and no trace remains. The GC&C serviced the passenger trade in Lonaconing from a station on the hill above the furnace. Sections of the right of way and rail bed still remain in that area.

Lonaconing is the home of the Georges Creek Library, a branch of the Allegany County Library system. The building was built to look like an Iron furnace. Lonaconing has a World War I memorial in the center of Town.

Dan's Mountain State Park is accessed by Water Station Road, from Route 36 in Lonaconing. It covers 480 acres, and is managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. It is a day-use park, and has remained mostly undeveloped, except for an Olympic-sized swimming facility. Numerous rustic picnic pavilions are available, as is a fishing pond. The Dan's Mountain Wildlife Management area covers over 9,500 acres.

Apples were shipped by boxcar from Charlestown (Southeast of Lonaconing), at the Sloan Farm. This facility had its own rail siding.

The Lonaconing Coal Company operated a mine there in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Buffalo Coal mine number 5 was located nearby. The Georges Creek Coal and Iron Company headquarters building survives as a dwelling unit, adjacent to the furnace.

Arguably, the most famous native of Lonaconing is baseball player Lefty Grove. He was born in 1900, and went on to a Major League career with Philadelphia and Boston, winning 300 games. He was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. He is buried in Frostburg, Md.

The Georges Creek region supplied many men to the Armed Forces, from the earliest days of the Revolution to the current ongoing conflicts. There is a memorial to the World War – I veterans in Lonaconing, opposite the library.

### Midland

This small town was originally named Koontz around 1850 after an early settler in the area, Henry Koontz. He received Military lots for his service in the Revolution. Midland has about 475 residents. The Town may have gotten its current name by being mid-way between Frostburg and Lonaconing (which it really isn't), or by early Scottish residents naming it after the Scottish Midlands. It was once a bustling town, with an Opera House, more saloons than churches, a train station, several banks, a ball park, and a shirt factory. There is a memorial plaque on the stone wall at the north end of town, which used to be a support for the railroad trestle, for veterans from Midland.

The town had some major rail congestion, with the confluence of the C&P, the GC&C, and the Cumberland and Westernport Electric Railroad (C&WE). The C&P serviced several small local industries at Midland, and maintained a freight house and station there. The late-comer GC&C crossed through the center of town on a long wooden trestle, removed in the late 1930's.

Nearby is Dan's Rock, on Dan's Mountain, a scenic overlook at 2,898 feet above sea level. One can see three states, Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania from its peak. There is a Midland Museum, located in the Town Hall. The Thrasher Carriage Collection used to be located in the old Midland School, as Jim Thrasher lived right outside of town. The collection is now housed near the Frostburg Train Station, on Depot Hill.

[www.midlandsroots.com](http://www.midlandsroots.com) This is an excellent reference website, and shows what a small community can do with a touch of new technology, to tell its story world-wide.

### Midlothian

The village of Midlothian was the site of the Bowery iron furnaces. These were two coke-fired furnaces built in 1868 by Cumberland Coal and Iron. There was a source of carbonate iron ore on the hill to the northeast, tapped by a tram road. Limestone was available from a hill to the east. The furnaces produced pig iron, and operated from 1874 to 1880. The pig iron was shipped by rail on the C&P via a spur line off the main. The product went to Cumberland.

From Midlothian Junction, the C&P made a connection with a logging railroad. The Juniata Lumber Company established a circular sawmill in Midlothian, at the end of a 3 foot gauge line that extended 12 miles into Garrett County along Big Savage Mountain. A Class-B Climax geared engine was used to haul the logs. From the sawmill, the lumber was shipped in boxcars over the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad. Twenty-five thousand board feet per day of railroad ties and dimensioned wood were produced at peak production. The sawmill facility was closed by 1913.

Midlothian is located south of Frostburg, and to the west of Route 936. Also known as Midlothian Junction, it has a population of 320 in 2010. It was primarily settled by Scotch immigrants, and named after a region near Edinburgh.

### Miller

Miller is a small collection of houses, just north of Midland, along Route 36. Miller is probably a family name.

### Montel

Montel is a collection of houses along Route 55, south of Clarysville. Montel is also a family name, of French roots.

### Morrisons

This is a family name. The Town was a major coal loading point on the railroad.

### Moscow (Mills)

There was a large stone grist mill here built by the Shaw family of Barton. It lasted until 1961. The large house is operated now as a bed and breakfast, the Shaw Mansion Inn ([http://shawmansioninn.com/Shaw\\_Mansion\\_History.html](http://shawmansioninn.com/Shaw_Mansion_History.html)).

## National

This is a small community of company houses for employees of the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad, who worked on the Carlos Branch. The houses are built to a standard plan, and originally included a chicken coop and outhouse. The plans are preserved in the C&P papers in the National Archives. The author's mother was born in the second company house from Rt. 36, as her father was an engineer on the C&P Carlos Branch, and entitled to company housing. The community also included company housing of the Consolidation Coal Company, for the nearby mine number 10, among others.

## Neff's Run

A minor spur of the Cumberland & Pennsylvania Railroad was the Neff's Run Branch. Neff's Run is a small creek that follows Maryland Route 55 into Midland from the north, and joins Georges Creek at the town. The Neff's Run branch was 1.2 miles long. It ran to a *Miller Company Works*, probably a coal mine, with double tracking at the end, and a load house. The line made at least 6 crossings of Neff's Run in a mile. The line appears on the original map showing the extension of the C&P southward from Frostburg to meet the Georges Creek Rail Road at Lonaconing. It appears to have been built at the same time as this section of main line, around 1856. It is still shown on a 1918 C&P map, but is gone without a trace on later maps. The exact date of abandonment and removal is unknown. No trace of this branch can currently be found. The location is just north of Midland, towards Clarysville.

## Nikep

Is this Pekin spelled backwards? It was the site of a mine tipple. It is located south of Lonaconing along Route 36.

## Ocean

This is the location of the mines of the Ocean Steamship Coal Company, later Consolidation Coal Company mine number one. Next along the railroad were the big mines at Ocean, with major buildings and ventilators for the shaft and drift tunnels. There was a large brick powerhouse for the electric mine engines. Ocean is located just north of Midland on Route 936 to Frostburg.

## Pompey Smash

This community is officially called Vale Summit, but legend has it that a teamster named Pompey managed to wreck his wagon on the steep hill here. It is located along Route 36, between Clarysville to Midland.

## Phoenix

This was the site of a mine tipple for the nearby Phoenix mine.

## Reynolds

Reynolds was the site of the Campbell Coal Company's Hampshire Mine. The Cumberland & Westernport Electric trolley line had a coal-fired Power Plant at Reynolds. There was a similar plant in



Clarysville, serviced by the C&P Railroad for coal deliveries.

Shaft – see, Borden Shaft.

### Vale Summit

see Pompey Smash. A paved road reached the town around 1921, from Clarysville,.

### Water Cliff

At Water Cliff, North of Lonaconing, there was a water tank, served by 'Water Station Run'. This was the location for the facilities of the George's Creek Rail Road, later used by the C&P. Present day Water Cliff Road branches off State Route 36, just before the exit for Dan's Mountain State Park. On the road to the State Park, off Rt. 36 north of Lonaconing, the base of the water tank can still be seen.

Dan's Mountain State Park has an Olympic sized pool, picnic pavilions, and a stocked fish pond. Dan's Mountain Wildlife Management area is some 9500 acres.

### Westernport

Westernport is where Georges Creek reaches the Potomac River. Across the river from Westernport is sister-city Piedmont, West Virginia. The Western Maryland Railway served Westernport, and the Baltimore & Ohio (now CSX) served Piedmont. The Georges Creek Rail Road (later, Cumberland & Pennsylvania) came down the Creek to Westernport, crossed over to Piedmont, and interchanged with the B&O.

The C&P's Westernport shops were damaged by flood in 1884, and burned in 1922. They were not replaced. The WM station at Westernport is preserved as a museum.

The first known record of a settlement in Westernport is from a French Military map of 1758. In 1774, the area was known as Hardscrabble, probably due to the rocky soil. In the mid-1790's the area became known by its current name, reflecting the westernmost navigable point on the Potomac. Coal and timber was loaded onto flatboats on the Potomac at Westernport, and taken down as far as Great Falls. There was no practical solution to get the boats back, so they were sold, or broken up and sold for timber.

Westernport is a town of some 2100 people. The adjacent town of Luke, Maryland, hosts the Mead-Westvaco Paper Mill, a major employer in the area.

Boats from Westernport sometimes were used to carry coal to Cumberland on the Potomac River. The C&O Canal was supposed to continue to the Ohio river, but had funding problems. One of the proposed westward paths, surveyed in the 1820's by Washington's Potomack Company, went by way of Westernport and the North Branch of the Potomac, using a series of lift locks and inclined planes.

### Woodland

This small community of some 113 people (2010 census) is located south of Frostburg along Route 936. At one time, it had a church and a store. Both are still standing, but used as residences.

## Georges Creek Miscellany

### The Steamer *Georges Creek*

The Parker Vein Coal Company operated a series of steamships, including the *Georges Creek*. It was common for the coal companies to own canal boats and fleets of coastal steamers and sailing ships. The Parker Vein's flotilla was sold at public auction in November 1854 in New York City to Mr. A. C. Hall. The *Georges Creek*, a 448 ton vessel, had been built in Philadelphia in 1853. It sold for \$14,000.

### The Detmold Riflemen

A local military outfit, the *Detmold Riflemen*, served the Union cause in the Civil War. This group was reorganized as Company A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Maryland Infantry, Potomac Home Brigade (of Allegany County). In October 1861, when Allegany County's quota for enlistment was 872 men, 1473 volunteered. At least 7 men from the area are known to have served the Confederate cause, and many others probably did.

### The Thrasher Carriage Museum

The Thrasher Carriage Museum started out as the private collection of James R. Thrasher of Midland. When his various examples of 19<sup>th</sup> Century wagons, carriages, and sleighs outgrew his property, he was able to gain access to the old Midland School on Paradise Street. Today, it is one of the nation's top collections of horse-drawn vehicles.

Jim's father was a blacksmith, which might explain his interest in horse drawn transportation. He had collected and restored hundreds of vehicles over his lifetime, and never missed a parade. When he passed away in 1987, the Allegany County Government purchased the collection, and moved it to a location near the Frostburg Station, on Depot Street, terminus of the Western Maryland Scenic Railway.

### Hoffman Drainage Tunnel

Near Clarysville at Route 40, the Hoffman Drainage tunnel was an engineering triumph of its age. Built in the period 1903 through 1906, it was hand-driven through solid rock for 2 miles to provide an outlet for water that was flooding the coal mines. The water had proven to be too much for the steam pumps, and coal production was stagnating. After an engineering survey of the tunnel project by the Consolidation Coal Company, a contract was let to Mr. Phillip Jenkins, Sr. of Wales. Work was begun from both ends in November of 1903 by Jenkins' four sons, William, Edward, James, and Phillip, Jr.

This work was different from coal mining. The Jenkins crew were familiar with hard rock mining from their native Wales. To speed progress, a shaft was sunk 181 feet deep inside Hoffman Mine number 3. From the bottom of this, the men dug in both directions, giving 4 working faces.

The tunnel proceeds in a straight line, except for an 18 degree turn located some 400 feet from the east (exit) portal. The tunnel is a uniform 8 feet in height and width, and follows a downgrade of some 1/3 percent. This put the exit 40 feet lower than the drainage area in the mine, but more than adequate for adequate flow. The excavation work proceeded in three shifts per day, involving blasting through hard rock. Working conditions were described as "wretched" due to the cold water seepage. The men

worked in rubber waders. A pump was added near the exit, at the horseshoe curve of the Eckhart Branch of the C&P railroad, to help control the flow. The miners used lard oil lamps for illumination. Drilling for the blasts was done by hand, with a three man crew. The excavated rock was removed through Hoffman number 3 mine, and dumped on the slate banks.

Later, a mule was lowered into the central shaft, and served there for 6 months. William Jenkins was in charge of the dynamite, and his brother James was supervisor of the digging. They stayed in the nearby Clarysville Inn while the work was proceeding. During the dig, there were only 2 accidents, and only 1 man died. The project cost \$300,000.

The tunnel was punched through on Saturday, July 21, 1906 at 9 pm. It was found to be off by less than three inches. The Frostburg Mining Journal of September 15, 1906, proclaimed, "The Great Work Complete." Inside the mines, the pumps were silenced, and gravity took over to lower the water level. It is estimated that 9,000,000 gallons of water were drained in 24 hours.

The impact on the coal workings was immediate. A tremendous amount of coal, previously inaccessible, was now available. Over 50 additional men were working the coal. In addition, conditions in the mines improved. Thirteen miles of mine drainage ditches fed the tunnel. Observers noted in the *Cumberland News* of 1906 that the volume of water carried by Braddock Run was ten times greater, with 2 months of the tunnel opening. The red coloration and the odor of sulfur was noted as far downstream as Wills Creek in the Narrows.

Tunnel maintenance was maintained until about 1953. The mines stopped working around 1960. As of February 2000, the concrete portal arch at the east or drainage end is still standing. The overburden upstream for some 30 meters is gone, and some timbering can be seen in the stream bed. The water seems to emerge upward from the end of a blind canyon, and flow through the arch. The inscription on the arch can still be clearly read: "1903-1906, Hoffman Drainage Tunnel, Length 2 miles."

The east end of the tunnel, with its associated concrete arch is located next of one of the bridge abutments that carried the C&P horseshoe curve over the creek at that point. The water flow is still quite brisk, with no obvious smell of sulfur, but with a decided red tinge to the water. Unfortunately, the tunnel outflow still feeds into Braddock Run, then Wills Creek, and the Potomac, eventually reaching the Chesapeake Bay. One generation's solution to a problem becomes a problem for succeeding generations.

## The C&O Canal at Georges Creek

The canal never was built west of Cumberland, but the many paths to the Ohio River had been surveyed. The Potomack Company did a survey for a waterway along the southern route in 1784. As it turns out, the B&O railroad used two of the possible paths on its way to the Ohio. This is not surprising, as there are few good options through the steep grades of the Alleghenies, and no complete water-level route. The Congress had in 1824 authorized the President "to cause the necessary surveys, plans, and estimates to be made of the routes of such roads and canals as he may deem of national importance in a commercial or military point of view, or necessary for transportation of the public mail,..."

The survey of potential canal paths west by the Corps of Engineers in 1876 found the prior surveys of Col. Thomas S. Sedgwick valid. He had used the prior work of Captain William G. McNeill, Topological Engineer, under the direction of the Board of Engineers for Internal Improvement, in 1824. This extended a series of surveys by the Potomack Company. These, in turn, went back to the surveying work of G. Washington for Lord Fairfax, and the detailed knowledge of the terrain by the agents of the Ohio Company (Gist, Cresap, and others). The new surveys included considerations of the sources of water, the cost of construction, the time required, and the relative merits of the routes. Sedgwick relied heavily on "lessons learned" of the European, particularly the French, canal system (Graeff, *Construction des Canaux et des Chemins de Fer*, Paris, 1861). A comprehensive study was submitted by Brigadier General A. A. Humphreys, Chief of Engineers, to the Secretary of War, and submitted to the 44th Congress. The building of the western extension continued to be of interest during World War I and as part of the New Deal Public Works Projects. But the reality of the costs always prevailed.

George Washington was a staunch support of trans-Appalachian routes for commerce. Before the Revolution, he saw the potential opportunity of opening up the lands for commerce. He explored ways of connecting the Potomac and the Ohio, even if it involved portages. His estate, Mount Vernon, was on the Potomac, and convenient to the Port of Alexandria. Washington had acquired lands in "the West", and received more in Western Pennsylvania as a result of his service in the Revolution. After he resigned his commission, he turned back to farming, and his interest in his western lands. He set off again in 1784 to search for the elusive passage to the West, and to collect back rents.

Washington discussed the Potomack Company with his peers, a distinguished group of wealthy landholders in Virginia. Then, his country called upon him again for service, as the President, This he reluctantly accepted, and this took his attentions away from the West. He did worry, however, that without adequate means of commerce and communication, the country west of the Appalachians might become another Nation, influenced by the British, the French, or the Spanish.

Washington's vision was a good one, not totally supported by the technology of the day. Washington had seen Rumsey's steamboat operate on the Potomac. It is not clear that he had ever seen or heard of a railroad. He was open to new technologies, but the required ones would mature after he was gone.

The two options involved different routes, we'll call the north and the south. The North route went up Will's Creek from its juncture with the Potomac, through the Narrows, and into Pennsylvania. Then it headed west up and through the mountain, and to the Castleman and Youghiogheny Rivers, then to the Monongahela River and Pittsburgh. the other route is up the Savage River to Deep Creek and the Youghiogheny and the Junction with the Castleman. From Georgetown to Pittsburgh, the elevation

gain was 3,837 feet. This was more than what had been considered feasible up to that time..

The survey team also went to the headwaters of the Potomac at the Fairfax Stone, in order to explore an option using the Black Water fork of the Cheat River. Unfortunately, this expedition had to turn back due to excessive snowfall.

The southern option involved following the Potomac to the confluence of the Savage River, then up the Savage to the Castleman. From Cumberland to Westernport, and a mile or so beyond would have been easy. The route is water-level, along the Potomac River. Shortly there after, Backbone Mountain is in the way. An early design involved a long tunnel, with a feeder lake in Garrett County. The tunnel would have been longer than any attempted yet in the world. Curiously, the lake would later be built as a source of hydroelectric power, and recreational boating. It is called Deep Creek Lake, an artificial lake of 3,900 acres extent. The proposed summit reservoirs were to have a capacity of over 252 million cubic feet, and a surface area of some 200 acres.

The report mentions that, although this route, the North Branch Route, was inferior to the Wills Creek one by having a higher summit level and a longer required tunnel. The local line extension from Cumberland to at least the confluence of Georges Creek at Westernport would be important for the coal trade. This would save 28 miles of rail transportation, but rail transportation was established by then. The section from Georges Creek to the Savage River was going to be problematical, due to existing bridges, mills, and the Town of Piedmont. I'll bet Senator Davis would have supported this, along with his West Virginia Central and Pittsburg Railroad, his Piedmont & Cumberland, Cumberland and Piedmont, Potomac & Piedmont Coal & Railroad Company, and the Bloomington & Fairfax Railroad. This extension would have added 30.5 miles to the canal at Cumberland. The drop in elevation is 335.3 feet, requiring 43 locks. The Savage River would be used as a feeder water supply.

This option would have a dam across the Potomac some 600 feet below the mouth of the Savage River. From the dam it was about 1/2 mile to "the Honorable H. G. Davis' sawmills." Boats would pass into the Potomac at a river lock upstream of Piedmont. The C&P Bridge crossing from Westernport to Piedmont would need to be raised or relocated. An alternative taking the canal through the center of Piedmont was considered and discarded, because of potential conflicts with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The Luke Paper Mill was built in 1888. It required large amounts of pulp wood. It occupied land that could have been used by the canal.

Another option would have been to terminate the canal before Piedmont, and use an extension of the C&P Railroad to reach it. Lock 19 would have been the Keyser lock. Keyser, once known as New Creek, was the site of major B&O yard facilities, and has a brick station. It was also the northern Terminus of the Twin Mountain & Potomac Railroad, an agricultural hauler. The canal line basically follows the B&O Railroad. At Rawlings, the canal would enter and follow the river for a while. This happens again further east, where the canal would enter the river for over a mile. Lock 39 would be at Warrior Run. From Cumberland to Georges Creek, the cost would have been almost two and a quarter million dollars. It was estimated this option would drop the cost of coal transportation to tidewater at \$1.65 per ton compared to the railroads. The then-current cost of coal transportation by the railroad was \$3.26 per ton for the 212 miles required.

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The Lewis J. Ort Library of Frostburg University also has extensive holding related to local history, including microfilm of newspapers. A research search by the author on the topic, “Georges Creek” returned 475 citations. In addition, the library has an extensive collection of maps of coal mines.

The Western Maryland Historical Library, [www.whilbr.org](http://www.whilbr.org), is another good resource.

If you enjoyed this book, you might find something else from the author interesting as well.

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